

San Luis Obispo County Right to Farm

Brochure

In San Luis Obispo we are blessed with lush rolling hills, fertile valleys, oak woodlands, and plenty of open space. A vast amount of open space in SLO County is attributed to the county's strong agricultural base. Open Space in SLO County may include land used or zoned for agricultural use. Land that does not currently have an agricultural operation may be used for agriculture in the future.

San Luis Obispo County supports, encourages, and protects agricultural operations and agricultural processing within the county and gives recognition to those operation's right to farm. Agricultural practices can sometimes cause some discomfort and inconveniences for neighboring residents. Many practices are a necessary function of certain agricultural operations and may be protected when practices are in accordance with the law. This pamphlet will help to inform you of the kinds of legal agricultural practices that are considered acceptable. You are also encouraged to call your local County Department of Agriculture with any questions or concerns.

State and County Policy to encourage and enhance agriculture...

State law and SLO County policy encourages, promotes, and protects agriculture. Agricultural Operations are protected from nuisance lawsuits as long as:

- ✓The agricultural operation is conducted or maintained for commercial purposes.
- ✓The agricultural operation is conducted or maintained in a manner consistent with proper and accepted customs and standards as established and followed by similar agricultural operations in the same locality, and in a lawful manner.
- ✓The agricultural operation predates the affected use(s) on your neighbor's property.
- ✓The agricultural operation has been in existence for more than three years.
- ✓The agricultural operation was not a nuisance at the time it began.



Above: Rows of blooming marigolds and other crops line the base of these local hills. Bottom left: Antique tractor decorates a field of grass used for grazing. Agriculture provides food, fiber, flowers, plants, and a working landscape that we can enjoy.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. Where can agriculture occur?

A. Agriculture may occur anywhere within the unincorporated boundaries of San Luis Obispo County. Crop production and grazing is an allowed use everywhere in the unincorporated areas of the county while agricultural processing and other structures may be limited to appropriate locations. Cities have their own rules and regulations.

Q. What kind of practices can be expected on agricultural lands?

A. Cultivation and tillage of the soil, the planting, growing, cultivation, spraying of pesticides and/or fertilizers, and harvesting of any agricultural commodity such as Wine Grapes, Vegetables, Orchards, Crops, Nurseries, or Cattle, and any practices performed by a farmer or on a farm as incidental to those farming operations, including preparation for market, delivery to storage or market, delivery to carriers for transportation to market.

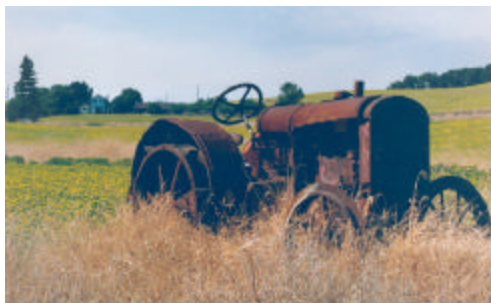
Q. If I live near an agricultural operation, what experiences may I expect?

A. Agricultural activities you may experience can include, but are not limited to the following:

noise, odors, fumes, dust, fertilizers, smoke, pesticides, insects, farm personnel and truck traffic, visual impacts, night time lighting, operation of machinery, and the storage, warehousing and processing of agricultural products or other inconveniences or discomforts associated with the protected agricultural operations 24 hours a day.

Q. Does an agricultural operator need a land use permit to begin farming or ranching on land that was previously used for non-agricultural purposes?

A. The answer is no. No permit is necessary for crop production and grazing on land anywhere in the County. Land use can always change, including areas primarily zoned for residential uses. In other words...what may be a Eucalyptus grove today, may be a Strawberry field tomorrow. On the other hand agricultural processing uses, such as wineries, need a land use permit.





Like a beautifully woven rug, these rows of lettuce blend and contrast color into our working landscape.

These pages were created for informational purposes only and nothing in the Right to Farm Ordinance shall prevent anyone from complaining to any appropriate agency, or taking any other available remedy, concerning any unlawful or improper agricultural practice.

For additional information concerning the Right to Farm Ordinance, please contact the San Luis Obispo County Department of Agriculture:

Arroyo Grande
(805) 473-7090

San Luis Obispo
(805) 781-5910

Paso Robles
(805) 237-3090

Pesticide Complaint Hotline English and Spanish:

(805) 781-1551
(800) 528-9333

County of San Luis Obispo - Agricultural Commissioner's Office
2156 Sierra Way, Suite A San Luis Obispo, CA 93401

Pesticide Use

Pesticides are used in many different ways, in many different settings.

What is a Pesticide?

A pesticide is any chemical that is used to control or prevent pests. The term pesticide includes:

- Fungicides – controls plant fungus problems
- Herbicides – controls weeds or unwanted plants
- Insecticides – controls unwanted insects
- Rodenticides – controls rodents such as squirrels, rats and mice.

What Should You Do if You Have a Complaint?

We encourage neighbors and agriculturalists to work together for voluntary solutions to concerns about pesticide use and other agricultural practices. If you have questions about pesticides and their use, contact the Department of Agriculture. If you suspect a pesticide is being used incorrectly you should notify the Department of Agriculture as soon as possible (preferably while use is occurring) so we may investigate the situation.

All agricultural pesticide use must be reported to the County Department of Agriculture. You may ask to review a specific pesticide report, or other use information (which is considered a public record).

In most cases neighbor notification prior to an application is not required.

What Does the Law Require?

Pesticides must not be allowed to drift, runoff, or move off target onto neighboring property. The County Department of Agriculture monitors and regulates the use of pesticides for compliance with mandated requirements. These requirements protect workers, the public's health and safety, the environment, and ensure food safety. We respond to all complaints and questions about the use of pesticides. The law requires that all pesticides must be handled in accordance with their registered label, and Federal, State or local requirements.



One of San Luis Obispo's proud Oaks stands tall among these vines. Natural heritage and a mix of our culture add to the beauty of the landscape.